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THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Vol. IX—No. 1 | LEHIGH UNIVERSITY — BETHLEHEM, PENNSYLVANIA | January, 1947

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Appointment Bureau

During its first year, the Appointment Bureau was increasingly active, and succeeded in placing a number of registrants. In Washington, the Bureau was continuously busy. The following comment from a head of department in a large state university is typical: "I found the CEA bureau very useful and interviewed, all told, fifteen candidates. Half a dozen of these eliminated themselves, but the above named and several others are interested and qualified. I hope that I may attract several of them."

The more that members and administrative officers use the Bureau, the more useful it will be.

* * *

Dear Professor Fitzhugh:

I wonder if the College English Association can help us in finding a man to head our advanced composition work and give some courses of this kind himself.

We already have three courses in writing for upper classmen and graduate students—plan to offer more and in general, to expand our offering. We want a man who has a serious interest in this kind of work and who has done some successful writing of his own—not an easy person to find. We would be much indebted to you if you could help us to locate the right man.

I should add that if he continues to write, he would be given promotion in the Department just as if he had taken a Ph.D. and written reams of learned articles.

Sincerely yours,

H. W. Herrington
Acting Chairman,
Department of English
Syracuse University

Annual Meeting

Attendance at the Association's Annual Meeting was 103 paid ($3.00) and about 40 more who came in after the dinner to hear the speakers and the discussion. Miss Helen C. White, the senior officer present, called the meeting to order after dinner and spoke of her two official trips to occupied Germany last summer, which had left her reassured of the values in the American university system. For while the German universities had had superb facilities and had trained their best students well, the poor machinery in Germany for spreading benefits of higher education through the nation explained much of the difference in spirit between the two countries.

In the absence of the Treasurer, convalescing from a minor operation, the Secretary summarized the report of the Association's finances which appears elsewhere in this issue. He pointed out that the NEWS LETTER and the Appointment Bureau had each paid for itself, and that the Association's cash balance had risen during the year despite the expense of a successful mail campaign for new members, the expense of increased secretarial assistance, and the payment to the Executive Secretary of $50.00 each month in which a NEWS LETTER appeared.

An early issue of the NEWS LETTER will present a symposium of the addresses by Professors Millett, Spencer, and Warren, and of comments which have reached the editor.

The meeting voted to send the following telegram to Miss Amanda Ellis in support of her efforts to secure reduced teaching loads for English teachers in high schools:

"Recognizing the basic importance of English teaching in American education and recognizing also the extra burden which the nature of that subject lays on the high school teacher of English, the Annual Meeting of the College English Association voted unanimously to request that NEA and other accrediting groups make every effort to secure improved conditions particularly reduced teaching loads repeat reduced teaching loads which will allow high school English teachers to do the professional job they wish to do."

NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT YALE

New developments in the teaching of English at Yale may be considered under three heads: (1) a revised program for students in the English Major; (2) a revised program of elementary courses in English; (3) a course in literature under the Yale College Program of Directed Studies.

The revisions in the English Major at Yale are designed to deepen the student's critical understanding of literature, to include within his range a number of basic works in other literatures, and to bring about a closer coordination of materials than can be achieved by the study of various periods in literary history. To accomplish these ends the student will be required (when the new program is in full effect) to select ten term-courses in the major, with at least two terms in each of the following categories of courses: (1) Individual Authors; (2) Historical Periods; (3) "Vertical" courses—cutting across periods and literatures; (4) courses in Language, Critical Method, and Creative Writing.

The third category will, when fully developed, include courses in "Tragedy", "Comedy", "Satire", "Epic", "The Novel", "The Essay", and a course dealing with special problems in the tradition and development of English poetry; they are conceived as small discussion groups requiring frequent critical and interpretative papers, together with appropriate reading in literary theory and criticism. These courses will aim at a diversity of materials by including, wherever possible, some appropriate works from foreign literatures in translation, and also by interpreting broadly the terms "Tragedy", "Comedy", "Satire", and "Epic". Thus "Tragedy" will include plays by Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Corneille together with novels by Hardy and Dostoyevsky; while "Epic" will include mock-epic, considering Homer, Dante, and Milton together with Cervantes, Pope, and Joyce. The arrangement and selection of these diverse materials within a given course will be made in accordance with the needs of critical study, and not necessarily according to chronology or the history of a genre. On the whole, then, these "vertical" courses will attempt to extend, reinforce, and link the materials of the various courses dealing with individual authors and historical periods.

The above categories of courses will provide the student with the advantages of both lecture and discussion, and will, at the same time, acquaint him with several possible approaches to a given literary work: through the context provided by the whole body of a writer's works; through the context of the historical background, together with the various authors of a given period; through the traditions of world literature; through the various approaches provided by linguistics, critical theory, and critical practice. Training in advanced composition will be given not only through the papers required in the above courses, but also through special courses in Creative Writing. Furthermore, the abler students in the major will be encouraged to undertake the writing of a Senior Essay in place of one course; this essay will be required of candidates for a degree with Honors and will be optional for all students in satisfactory standing.

The Departmental Examination at the end of Senior year, consisting of two four-hour periods, will test three fundamental aspects of the student's attainment: first, his ability to coordinate his

(Continued on page 8, col. 1)

New England Meeting

It is now planned to hold a New England meeting of the College English Association at Simmons College on Friday afternoon and evening, March 14, and Saturday morning, March 15. New England members will be notified of the program by mail, and if possible. the program will appear in the February issue of the NEWS LETTER.

All queries and suggestions should be sent to F. Cudworth Flint, 4 Wheelock Street, Hanover, New Hampshire.

THE NEWS LETTER

Editor
ROBERT T. FITZHUGH

Editor Emeritus
BURGES JOHNSON

Associate Editor
J. GORDON EAKER, Jersey City Junor College, Jersey City, New Jersey

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Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Libraries, $1.50.

Oh! . . .

"Literature is the enemy! The writer is offensive and the creative spirit anathema. Look here; I have been studying Smart's 'Song to David.' If I were to write a series of articles on it, my trustees would be pleased. But if I wrote another 'Song to David,' they'd probably fire me." The speaker was so well known that all members of the Association would recognize his name at once; and to test his judgment they may reflect on the attitude of **their** departments and **their** colleges to writers in the flesh. Is it warmly receptive, suspicious, patronizing, negative, hostile? And is the free and inquiring spirit, alive or classic, merely something dangerous to be hedged about with facts, and safely labeled?

Miss Helen Hull says in another column that the writer "attempts to communicate . . . what life means to him, or what he thinks should be done about its suffering and evil, or what he thinks the ultimate goal and good should be." But how many students gather any such idea from their experiences in English class? Apparently all too few from the common brush-off administered an English teacher when he reveals his occupation. "Well," comes the pitying polite reply, "I guess I just never was very good in English"; or, more simply, the bottle-stopping, "Oh." To a great many, literature has not been even the enemy. Merely a bore.

Opinion Received

CRITIC is dead, done in by democratic process. CEA in the title offends many members. Titles suggested: ALL AT CEA, BELLMAN, CRIER, EXAMINER, LINGO, NEWS.

Editor's suggestion: THE SCRIBE.

Election of Officers

The slate of officers proposed by the Nominating Committee has apparently been elected almost unanimously. Ballots are still coming in. A final report will appear in the February issue.

From the Mail . . .

Dear Professor Fitzhugh:

Your editorial in the November **News Letter** raises the main problems of freshman English: the other departments just don't care, the students don't care, and pretty soon the English instructor doesn't care. I do not think, however, that the situation will be improved by abolishing the English requirement and thus throwing the baby out with the bath water. No one seriously maintains that freshmen really need less training in writing.

Perhaps our experience at the General College of Boston University may point to one solution for these problems. We require that all students take English Composition continuously during the two years that they are with us. They receive English instruction in sections of about twenty-five students each. This requirement of two full years of English Composition is in striking contrast to the widespread "shotgun prescription" that you mention.

In the General College, moreover, a member of the English department reads and marks everything that every student writes in every course, and this mark contributes to his final standing in English. As teachers of English we cannot depend on the other departments to do our job. If we do not do it, it will not get done.

In addition to receiving intensive class instruction in composition and speech and possible remedial work if the student needs it, he hears three lectures a week the first year and two lectures a week the second in the large lecture hall. Wherever possible, these lectures present material that would otherwise have to be given twenty-four times if it were left to the section instructors. Thus, the instructor's time is freed for meeting more directly the needs of their own students.

These large lectures deal, in the main, with literature. There is thus always the possibility of a section-man's presenting a lecture or two before the large group on his specialty. The whole staff is involved in the planning and conduct of these large lectures. Each member of the staff thus has a vital part in the total program.

To perceive the full implications of these features, one needs to understand the co-ordinated nature of the whole curriculum at the General College in which basic aspects of man and society are dealt with simultaneously or in sequence by the various departments. They are thus all involved at once in a common enterprise, in which the students' ability to express their thoughts and perceptions are of vital concern to all members of the faculty. Although an adequate description of the whole General College course is too big a subject to present here, these few details from the English program perhaps point to one solution for the problems that you mention in your editorial.

Willis Wager,
Chairman, Department of English, Boston University General College.

* * *

Dear Professor Fitzhugh:

Of all the papers that come to my desk, the **News Letter** offers the best reading for its size. I wish it the best of success but, if you change the name to **Critic**, I hope instead of being critical, it will continue to be interesting and constructive.

At the risk of hurting your feelings, I should like to offer one suggestion. As an editor, I realize the troubles you must have with make-up, but your paper would be much easier to read if you could arrange to have the articles as continuous as possible instead of being continued from one page to another. This is not a serious matter at all, but it is rather confusing to have the articles so chopped up.

Cordially yours,
Paul V. Bacon,
Editor-in-Chief
Allyn and Bacon.

Dear Professor Fitzhugh—

Impatiently, I wish to protest against the way the News Letter prints it articles. I start an interesting article—after half a column its neck is broken by "Continued on p. 3," and after another half column there, its back is broken by "Continued on p. 5." Why should pleasant professional reading be thus jitterbugged?

The idea that every subject must be given a headstart on Page One implies that your readers are merely headline-scanners in search of sensations. Is not the practice of such publications as the London Times Literary Supplement, in presenting articles as continuously printed as possible, a more readable and less helterskelter procedure?

Yours truly,
Morse Allen
Trinity College

Do members find the make-up of this issue more attractive?

* * *

Communications Kill

The following letter was sent to the Editor by Norman Foerster, who does not state where he got hold of it. He says: "Here is a letter on the Communications Kill course formerly known as Freshman Composition, the required course which you recently referred to in an editorial as an isolated discipline. Personally, I'm not in favor of isolationism, political or curricular. N.F."

Dear President Brass: As head of the English department in Lernmor College, I wish to protest to a practice which has just come to my attention. I understand that several departments of the College, including History, Sociology, Dance, and Astronomy are actually requiring students to hand in papers written in the English language, papers written, or at least intended to be written, in words, sentences and paragraphs.

I had supposed that this sort of thing was ruled out forty-eight years ago when our Department of English was specifically assigned the work in written English. All these years it has been located in the catalogue, and in the budget, under English. All these years we have done this work, as you know President Brass, both loyally and expensively. You will not wish to pay for the work twice. We, for our part, do not wish to be interfered with in the performance of our duty.

I must therefore request that these meddling departments be required to stick to their subjects, as we stick to ours. I grant that we have erred in the past. There was a time when we assigned readings in the Bible, to which there was objection by various alumni, some who thought the Bible belonged to the churches and some who thought it had no place anywhere (I have forgotten on which ground we dropped it). There was

also a time when we assigned some of the dialogues of Plato, to which the department of Philosophy objected because Plato is philosophy. We yielded to these pressures.

Now we are entitled, in turn, to enter a complaint against any and all departments that have ventured to include written work in English. The teaching of English belongs to the English department. Is any other department familiar with 101f errors? We alone know what bad writing is. We alone know what good writing is. We alone are competent to read writing.

We do not enjoy this work. Nor do we assert that we are performing it with any marked success. But we certainly do not propose to give it up, either to the high schools or to our colleagues in other departments.

Respectfully yours,
A. Grey Fogge.

SLOT MACHINE CULTURE

A few issues back we commented in what we thought were terms of fantasy on the unlikely development of coin machines to which people would rush to purchase books by the simple means of dropping money in the slot. The laugh is on us. First the telephone rang and a gentleman (who wishes his firm to remain anonymous at this point) told us his company was not only working on the problem but had an experimental machine in operation. A few days later we received a letter from the Public Relations Bureau of Coin Machine Industries, Inc. (who insist on taking us seriously despite our best efforts) informing us that a firm in Chicago manufactured a book dispensing machine six or seven years ago and that still another New York outfit is producing such a thing at this very moment. Along with the letter was a news story which asserts that sometime between 200-100 B.C. Hero of Alexandria "combined religion and commerce in a sacrificial vessel which spouted holy water with the insertion of five drachms." But we aren't ready to admit defeat. Let them turn out a coin machine that will not only dispense a book but also a loaf of bread, a flask of wine and thou at the same time and we'll be the first customer.

THE PLEASURES OF PUBLISHING
January 27, 1947.
XIV, 2.

I've Been Reading

Members are invited to contribute to reviews of books, old or new, which they wish to call to the attention of other English teachers. Professor J. Gordon Eaton is now Head, Department of English, Jersey City Junior College, Jersey City, New Jersey.

EDUCATION AND WORLD TRAGEDY, by Howard Mumford Jones, Harvard University Press, 1946, 178 pp., $2.50.

Any impartial observer of the history of the world must agree with Mr. Jones that the past fifty years have been the worst. To the wholesale murders committed in Germany and Russia, the slaughter of millions in war, has now been added the brutality of the atomic bomb. The next ten or fifteen years may actually decide whether the human race is to survive. This is not rhetoric but scientific fact.

To prevent this world tragedy, Mr. Jones finds education as now conceived incompetent. The authoritarian Catholic approach, the great books program, or general education in the Western tradition which brought this impasse are all found too remote from the immediate need to save us. Dean Jones offers his own pragmatic six-point program:

1. Professional or vocational training for all.
2. The theory of science and the application of scientific discoveries to our technology.
3. The working of representative government in the United States and Britain.
4. The study of Russia.
5. The study of the Orient.
6. The study of personal relationships in modern society.

Mr. Jones pins all his hope of getting this solution before America on reform in the graduate schools, where college teachers come from. He would relegate most graduate work into Research Training Institutes, found small Graduate Colleges to prepare only for college teaching, manned by professors who see the philosophic implications of specialities. God grant that many may spring up in the East and South at once, where Mr. Jones sees most hope for them, lest we perish.

J. G. E.

PEOPLE IN QUANDARIES, by Wendell Johnson (Harper and Brothers, 1946, 532 pp.)

shades of Korzybski! "What crimes are committed in thy name!" Dr. Johnson falls into an error of his own condemning. He decries the obvious truth that people attribute their own ills or those of society to *one* cause. Remove that and Paradise is regained. But he then prescribes a simple semantic pill for our social indigestion.

Since only man uses a language and only man suffers from personal and social maladjustments, we must have talked ourselves into a labyrinth of trouble, and we must talk our way out. Fortunately, there is a semantic Theseus to slay the disturbing minotaur.

The author is frequently prolix. In the 32 page chapter, *The World of Words*, one idea only is advanced: though we, presumably, speak the same language, in reality we do not. The word *intelligence*, for instance, conveys one concept to me and another to you. Thus half the trouble in this world is the result of our not understanding each other.

If, as Dr. Johnson reports, one adult in 200 is now institutionalized, and one in 10 has some neurosis that causes a degree of maladjustment, every instructor of speech disorders—usually caused by some social maladjustment—may read this book with profit. It uses a minimum of technical terms and includes a wealth of pertinent illustration.

J. R. Pelsma
Kans. State Teachers College
Pittsburg

On October 26, 1946, at the Faculty Club of New York University the College Conference on English in the Central Atlantic States, in a joint meeting with the New York Council of College Teachers of English, adopted the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that this meeting deplores the present cheapening of the English instruction in some colleges as a result of oversized classes. For the sake of efficient teaching, every possible effort should be made to hold composition classes, in particular, to twenty students, and under no circumstances should they exceed twenty-five. In a larger class the recitation suffers, and in addition the instructor is unable to read carefully the student's written work and to give him the individual attention in conference which the best professional practice demands. Therefore, we urge the special attention of college departments and administrators to this problem.

Karl J. Holzknecht,
Chairman.

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BOOK NOTE

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What I Expect of English Teachers

Despite the fact that I have been heavily involved in administrative responsibilities during the last fifteen years, I have managed up until the present year to continue my teaching of classes of English, which I began twenty-two years ago. The cynics in our profession might therefore remark that I should know enough about the conditions of teaching English on a college campus to prevent my expecting anything whatever of the English teacher. I must confess, however, that my experience in the field has increased rather than decreased my dependence upon the teacher of English as a key person in the total educational program of the college.

Every student who attends an American college needs three types of education; general education, liberal education, and specialized education. By general education I mean that education which is required to become an effective member of the human race; it provides us with the means of communication with one another, with an understanding of the relationships between human beings and the institutions which they establish, with an analytical approach toward the physical universe of which we are all a part, and with a concept of the position which we hold in the stream of time and history. By liberal education I mean the education that frees us from the confines of the group, the patterns, and conventions and enables us to become truly an individual; it is therefore the education which discovers our greatest abilities and interests and then develops them to the highest capacities which we can achieve. By specialized education I mean the education which will enable us to make a living in a competitive economic world; especially in America there is very little leisure class, and every educated person is expected to have some place in which he can render a valuable service to his fellow men.

The teacher of English should be expected to work effectively at all three levels. In the customary freshman English and sophomore literature courses, he has an unparalleled opportunity to integrate all the aspects of general education. The skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking at a reasonable level of quality are an essential part of the equipment of every human being. Although they are used in every department and division of the curriculum, every English teacher knows that the responsibility for training in these skills rests squarely upon his shoulders. No real English teacher complains of the magnitude of this load. He relishes the amplitude of his responsibilities. It is true that progress in all four of these fields is frequently discouragingly slow. Students complain bitterly about learning the mechanics of writing or speaking; faculty members in other departments make barbed comments about the results of the instruction. Nevertheless, I know from experience that even the mechanics of composition can be taught and learned with enjoyment, and we have a right to expect of every English teacher that he will try to build audience appeal into communications instruction. The touchstone here would seem to be variety, an acceleration of tempo in the classroom, together with ample exercises and frequent personal conferences for the slower or less able students.

In the general education literature courses and even in the supplementary reading for the freshman composition course, we have every right to expect that the English teacher will convey to the students something of the thrill of the wide horizons of human knowledge, experience, and imagination. To accomplish this he must place his emphasis not upon dates and chronological sequence or even literary style, but upon persistent problems in human experience and the ways in which individual authors or the characters created by these authors have reacted to these situations. In other words, the English teacher must bring out the psychology and the sociology in literature; literary forms can be discussed as they grow out of the conventions of the day or the operations of the writer's mind, and they should not become a millstone around the neck of the student. This course is perhaps the last opportunity that higher education has to make an adult reader out of the college student, and all barriers should be removed to the appreciation and absorption of the written word.

Liberal education also begins in the freshman composition or communications course, for the teacher of English has the best opportunity of understanding the individuality of his students. The first papers which are written for the class are usually of an autobiographical nature, and the revelation of hopes, dreams, ambitions, deficiencies, quirks, and peculiarities should be enough to give the instructor a hint as to how he can best develop the individuality of the student. If I had a completely free hand in the setting up of the freshman advisory program, I would make the freshman English teacher the adviser to the freshman and urge him to spend much of his time in personal conference with the students. Efficient service in this realm would demand that the English teacher acquaint himself with methods of guidance and personnel analysis, so that his counsel would be more than merely on the technique of English composition. Every student should have some member of the faculty to whom he could go and pour out his whole soul, and since intelligent listening is one of the four branches of communications study, here is a good place for the English instructor to practice what he preaches. Also, in the upper level courses, the instructor should be prepared to give more and more rein to the individual taste and preferences of the student. The idea of reading a hundred great books is an excellent one, but the hundred best books for an individual student should be quite different from those of his next-door neighbor. It should be the function of the English instructor to see to it that the very best books are chosen to meet the needs and interests of each individual student. Advanced composition courses and courses in advanced public speaking should attempt to strengthen the individuality of the student to the point that his personality will become truly unique.

Finally, English is not merely a cultural subject; it is also a direct path to the earning of a living. This is obvious in the case of those students who look forward to making a living as journalists or writers of articles for magazines, or even as novelists or playwrights; but it is equally true of lawyers, ministers, teachers, and other professional men and women. Courses in literature and composition can both be pointed toward vocational goals. There is no reason why we should apologize for using vocationalism in our teaching. It is one of the strongest basic urges in the human heart and mind. If a younger Vincent Sheean will work hard at writing because he hopes to become a foreign correspondent, why not use this motivation frankly and understandingly? It is in the field of

(Continued on page 5, col. 1)

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What I Expect . . .

(Continued from page 4, col. 3)

specialized education that student activities become especially important. Practically every campus has its student newspaper, its student literary magazine, debating society, little theatre, radio station, and literary clubs. The experience to be gained in active participation in one of these groups is often of a semi-professional nature. Oxford University has boasted that most of the members of Parliament have been trained in the Oxford Union; why shouldn't American colleges view with the same pride the training of our future newspaper editors, magazine writers, radio announcers, stars of stage and screen, Congressmen, and public speakers in extracurricular activities? With the possible exception of the Physical Education Department, there is no department in the average American college which has a more direct connection with student activities than does the English department. It is perfectly natural that the members of this department should be asked to serve as faculty advisers to the activities described above. Is it not therefore the duty of the members of the English department to see that these activities are properly handled in order to produce the very best educational results?

If the picture that I have drawn of what I expect of English teachers seems to be gargantuan and impossible, I hope it will not be thought that I do this because I wish to load disagreeable tasks on members of this department. Instead it is because I see the English teacher at the center of the whole educational picture that I want him to assume this full responsibility. It is because I love the teaching of English with all these implications and ramifications that I am looking forward to the day when I can be relieved of some of my administrative burdens and get back into the classroom.

Carter Davidson,
President, Union College, Schenectady, New York.

The 1947 Annual Seminar on Developmental Reading will be conducted by the Reading Clinic Staff, Department of Psychology, Temple University, from February 3 to February 7, inclusive. The central theme: **Differentiated Corrective and Remedial Reading.**

Speaking As A Novelist

(Miss Hull's "Notes for talk at CEA luncheon, Dec. 14, 1946," Her own caption.)

Speaking as a novelist, I think of literature always as something contemporary. That it always is contemporary at the time when it is written is something graduate students seem to forget. Literature is the product of forces in the period when a writer lives working on his special personality and equipment.

The writer has responded emotionally and intellectually to the spectacle of his fellow men, to his own problems as he lives with them. He attempts to communicate to them what life means to him, or what he thinks should be done about its suffering and evil, or what he thinks the ultimate goal and good should be. In any age, this is literature. Not all that is written is permanent, of course. Some writers are as inferior in their own way as are other members of the human race. But behind the written word lies this desire to communicate the **immediate pressure** of events, social or personal, upon the writer.

You can't understand literature without recognizing this. Always there is the recurrence of the universal, the return of the few common denominators of living, birth, love, hunger, pain, treachery, honor, sacrifice, love of country, fidelity to a code. The writing which contains these common denominators is perhaps the writing which lasts. Even that you can't understand fully without knowing its setting, its social and economic basis, its code of behavior.

If there could be a constant correlation in college work between courses, so that the student had the history of a period, especially the social and economic history, the philosophy of the period, the religious beliefs, and the poetry, the drama, the fiction, he might begin to understand what he read. I never did, although my reading was voracious. American history, as I studied it, was a matter of settling a country, fighting for it, fighting within it—not a vast experiment in a new form of man's governing man. The literature never fitted into this martial background. I read it and answered questions about when the authors lived.

Your topic for this meeting is: What should the college do for the student who is not majoring in English?

1. Help him to understand that English composition is his means of communicating with his fellow men.

2. Help him to find the reading he enjoys so that he won't be forever limited to LIFE and the SATURDAY EVENING POST and the daily paper. Teach him to read a book. Perhaps this means that his college reading should be more contemporary than it is, at least to start him off right. Current editorials, current short stories, fiction, biography, essays. This means more work for the teacher.

It is much easier to give a standard course in the history of literature, dividing it into periods, knowing with sureness what the centuries have tested out as good than it is to select one's own material on which no established criticism has been made.

Perhaps the student's reading could have some correlation with his major, science or history or economics or psychology. A general cultural ideal is fine, but if it leaves the student untouched emotionally, it isn't education.

Thinking of this meeting last Wednesday in the dentist's chair, I asked my dentist, who is an intelligent man of well-informed and clear attitudes about our contemporary scene, what he had got out of his college English. He had graduated from a New York university. He said nothing at all. High School nothing. In the grades he liked to read, in high school he read Ivanhoe and drew maps of tournaments, in college he memorized dates of men and phrases given by the professors about tendencies. Only after college did he begin to read for himself.

As for composition. In my own experience, I remember that in high school I wrote a piece, based on a newspaper item, about a hired girl who thought she was Joan of Arc, built a bonfire in her bedroom, and thus burned down the house. My teacher told me I should have made her seek some noble act instead of setting the fire. This was my first discovery of the difficulties of realism. For my next piece I borrowed concrete details about dust on leaves, I think from Mary Wilkins Freeman, and got an A. What price original thinking? In my first college teaching, I found that the advanced course in creative writing, given by the head of the department, spent the entire year studying ROMOLA.

Only a short time ago I was asked to address a group of college juniors and seniors majoring

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CORRECTION

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in English. A course in Creative Writing, I was told, and would I talk on the use of the students' own material? The preliminary briefing which one of the instructors gave me pointed out that the girls were doing research in Americana: Baltimore in the 1880's, Williamsburg, The Ozarks, the Mormons. Some of the girls wished to write historical novels. The professor, when I suggested the novels might better deal with life which the girls knew at first hand, said that since all college work dealt with the past, so should the creative writing. No wonder that the students in my fiction classes here whom I most dread to see coming are those who have been trained in college writing courses. They are affected, over-literary, they write what Ivor Brown in the S. R. L. recently called "puddering" English.

Every teacher of English composition should read Rudolph Flesch's ART OF PLAIN TALK. Then he should consider English composition as a way to help the student into communication with his fellow men. One of the young women in the college course which I visited last week said that when she and the other girls talked among themselves they were honest, but in their papers and in their classes they tried to say what they figured out the teacher wanted!

Finally, the teacher should have some fire. E. B. White somewhere in ONE MAN's MEAT says that when a hen lays an egg, the hen actually has a higher temperature than normal. That makes the hen a zealot. No teacher is much good unless he is a zealot, unless he knows the excitement that lies in sincerity and truth and recognition in literature of the creative impulse, and discovery in literature of one's own needs, and the ultimate satisfaction in the ability to communicate to one's fellows whatever one thinks and feels and has learned of life.

Helen Hull
Columbia University

Refuting Berkeley

Refuting Berkeley long ago,
Dr. Johnson stubbed his toe.
What can the modern skeptic do?
The foot is in the other shoe:
Striking a stone in ridicule,
He only stubs a molecule.

Marcia Lee Anderson
Hollins College, Va.

College Composition And the Humanities

It is a small wonder that teachers of English are getting increasingly critical of the result of work which apparently justifies neither the money spent upon it by the state nor the discouraging weight of work on the teachers themselves. Furthermore, in this age of change so rapid and widespread that all the old framework of life tends to disappear, and even no pattern of life seems left, thinking teachers feel the futility of the old rhetorical tradition, which leaves the student writing in a kind of vacuum. They realize that no one can write by thinking of rules. One can write only by having something to say, and the emphasis on rules stultifies any creative impulse one may have. These teachers feel that the student should first realize that the raw materials of this work have intrinsic values.

The proposal which Mr. Odell Shephard made at the New York meeting of the College English Association last spring was an outgrowth of this critical approach to the teaching of college English. The readers of the News-Letter may remember that this proposal called for a unified two years of reading, writing, and thinking that would give the student a real education in ideas and teach him to write at the same time. The course was to be founded on books giving ideals of ethics, human dignity, and liberty. The chief hesitation of many of the teachers at that meeting seemed to spring from a doubt that the plan would work in school practice. It was the fact that in the Oklahoma A. & M. College we have been doing for nine years and with increasing success much of what Mr. Shephard proposed that moved Mr. Fitzhugh to ask me for a brief account of our program.

When we began our work in the Humanities nine years ago, our college had about six thousand students, and our problems offered no essential differences from those of the average American college of its size. Our students were of all kinds: some well prepared, many very poorly prepared for college English, which all of them were required to take. In conjunction with the entire School of Liberal Arts, our staff had been working on a general Humanities course, in which we hoped to acquaint the student with some of the great human values by which man has lived and at the same time to overcome as far as we could the disintegration of all a student learns into little water-tight compartments of English, history, art, music, and science. We decided to tie our English composition into this general Humanities course and base the written work on the books selected for that course.

The general course in the Humanities is a three semester course carrying nine hours credit and it is taught by teachers from the departments of music, art, history, literature, science, physical education, and philosophy. The average student takes two of these courses; many students elect the third. We begin with the Greek civilization, basing our lectures on Greek science, Greek democracy, the versatility of the Greek mind, its delight in the physical world, its admiration for balance and proportion, its love of beauty, its sense of moral righteousness. These lectures are followed by illustrations of these Greek interests in dances given by the physical education department and by slides of the architecture, sculpture, and other Greek arts. The students read the *Iliad*, the *Agamemnon*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Medea*, and the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Death of Socrates*.

Before the war put a premium on our classroom space, the composition was taught in two two-hour laboratories a week. The writing was done in class where the student could get help and instruction as his problems arose. He was required to master the reading assigned so that he would be prepared for any subject set at the beginning of the class period. The first themes were often failures because it took (and takes) a few days to convince the student that when we ask him to master the material, we mean exactly that. This close reading, and we give short assignments, increases the student's vocabulary, gives him a feeling for better sentence structure, thus making him more critical of his own, and, best of all, gives him raw material for his writing for which he can have genuine respect. Even the poorer student, for instance, gets interested enough in the Cassandra scene in the *Agamemnon* to write a lively paper on the elements of greatness in that scene or on its theatrical possibilities. Arguments on Socrates' judgment in defending himself as he did or on his refusal to escape because he owed so much to Athens have brought good papers even from the students who attacked his position; and in arguing their own point of view on a question which has really aroused their interest, they see more reason for care in sentence structure, diction, and progression of thought.

We follow this procedure through the other periods, Roman, Medieval, Renaissance, the Modern World, and the third semester, the American. Not all the assigned readings for the Humanities are used in the laboratory, though the teacher may at any time set a paper on the other books. During the first semester our main papers are based on the *Agamemnon*, the *Oedipus Rex*, the *Medea*, *Henry IV, Part I*, and the *Merchant of Venice*, with occasional papers on the *Iliad*, *Morte D'Arthur*, and *Don Quixote*. The student reads in the Humanities in addition the *Rerum Natura* of Lucretius and a number of Chaucer's tales. We have, as a

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rule, two longer papers a semester in which a student traces, for instance, an idea through three Greek plays or works out a problem involving several periods such as a discussion of Lancelot, Hotspur, and Don Quixote as an illustration of a changing human pattern. The method is an indirect one in which the burden is more on the student and less on the teacher, and it has produced for us far more satisfactory results than the older method. It has the great added advantage of making the student, with each paper he writes, more intellectually mature.

After all, it is no new method. It is the method by which Franklin and Bunyan learned to write. It is the method of Milton in his *Letter on Education*:

> "And that which casts our proficiency so much behind is . . . a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, orations, which are the final work of a head long filled by reading and observing. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit. Whereas, if after some preparatory grounds of speech by their certain forms got into memory, they were led to the praxis thereof in some chosen short books lessoned thoroughly to them, they might forthwith proceed to learn the substance of good things and arts in due order, which would bring the whole language quickly into their power."

Agnès Berrigan
Oklahoma A. & M.

* * *

Miss Berrigan adds the following comment in a letter:

I am enclosing a brief account of our Humanities composition program, which I promised to send you. I have made it brief and have omitted some of the mechanical aids which have helped us. For instance, we have found that projecting a theme on a large screen where the class can see the whole paper at once stimulates their interest and holds their attention as reading a paper cannot do.

The college buys all the books for the class, four or five hundred of each text used, while the bookstore keeps copies for the student who wants to own them.

How Does a Workshop Work With Freshmen?

I have received a small Carnegie grant to set up a writing workshop for freshmen—not a selected superior group but just the run-of-the-mine entering college students. At the suggestion of Burges Johnson, I am writing this note to request information from members of CEA concerning any experience they may have had with similar projects in other institutions. I shall be happy to reciprocate with occasional reports on the progress of my own experiment, which I hope to get under way in the fall.

For years I have observed that many freshmen write better on a short theme assigned, begun, and completed in the regular class period than they do when they have a week to prepare a theme outside. Through conferences I have discovered that they waste an almost unbelievable amount of time in the mere mechanics of starting to write and coming to a conclusion. And the results, alas, are too often discouraging.

The primary objective of freshman theme-writing, it seems to me, ought to be not creative authorship but simply the development of facility and skill in written expression. Training should be directed at what magazine editors call fact writing. Each theme is an opportunity for the student to practice the application of principles of correctness and effectiveness studied in the freshman English course. Every student should learn that he can set down his own ideas and observations clearly and acceptably even though he may not be conscious of the mystical guidance of a hovering cherub he fondly calls inspiration. All students need to develop skill in writing as a tool; those with special talent may progress toward mastering it as an art.

But if the student needs help, he needs it especially while he is writing. No amount of professorial criticism of the finished theme can fill that need, beneficial as correction and revision have proved to be. Freshman courses in the sciences, aimed at teaching principles and developing basic skills in technique, have made good use of the laboratory. In assigning freshmen a topic for a theme, do we not in effect hand him a dogfish or frog or earthworm to take to his room, expecting him to bring it back skilfully dissected a week later?

With a trial sample of two or three regular sections of freshman English, I propose to arrange a schedule of one two-hour period a week for writing, along with two conventional one-hour periods. Practically all themes will be written during the two-hour period in the workshop. The workshop itself is to be simply furnished with writing tables and equipment, a few standard dictionaries and reference books, a blackboard, and a bulletin board for display materials. The experimental sections will receive three hours credit each semester, the same as the conventional ones. It is expected, however, that the extra hour in the workshop each week will actually effect a saving in the time students spend in theme-writing, and that it may reduce somewhat the time required of the instructor in reading and grading themes. But the project is designed above all to increase the effectiveness of the work in freshman composition.

Again, I shall welcome correspondence concerning work that has been done in writing workshops, especially with freshmen, elsewhere.

George L. Sixbey
Centenary College
Shreveport, La.

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP

Academic literary scholarship in America is devoted to trivia — that twentieth-century mountain of trivia which dwarfs the dunciad of the centuries. Of course, commercialized university administration is responsible, demanding that professors publish for position and promotion. But trivia are trivia. And, as a rule, the professors shower us with trivia not even American but trivia about the most minor leavings of British literature long ago.

From a review by E. C. Ross of **Leo Tolstoy**, by Ernest J. Simmons, Atlantic Monthly Press, in **Saturday Review of Literature**. XXX, 3, January 18, 1947.

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It is to the members' advantage to be registered with the Appointment Bureau when telegrams like the following come in:

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Receipts:		
1945—45 members at $2.00	$ 90.00	
1946—new members at $2.00 (252)	504.00	
1946—new members at $1.00 (75)	75.00	
1946—renewals (440½) at $2.00	881.00	
1 member paid bal. on 1946	1.00	
1947—36 new members and renewals at $2.00	72.00	
1947—4 members paid $1.00 towards dues	4.00	
1948—1 member paid $1.00	1.00	
Total dues	$1628.00	
Subscriptions—10 at $1.50	15.00	
Sale of News Letters	1.50	
Sale of Chap Books	1.00	
Employment Bureau (48) at $3.00	144.00	
Advertising	879.00	
Royalties on Freedom Speaks	28.11	
Gifts	.85	
Misc.	52.25	
Total Income	$2748.71	$ 2748.71
TOTAL CREDITS		$ 4103.45
Expenditures:		
Stationery and Postage	$ 703.60	
Refunds	.75	
Publications	617.65	
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Bank Charges	2.30	
Secretary's work (Treasurer)	156.38	
Secretary's work (Secretary)	324.19	
Annual Meeting expenses	133.17	
Cost of preparation of report of N. Y. meeting	59.73	
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Gift to Red Cross (from Freedom Speaks)	171.00	
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Misc.	2.00	
Total Expenditures	$2618.67	$ 2618.67
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Red Cross Contribution

January 13, 1947

Dr. J. H. Jackson
Jamestown Road
Williamsburg, Virginia.

Dear Dr. Jackson:

This is to thank you again, at the end of our fiscal year, for the generous contribution of $171.00, made by the College English Association to the 1946 Red Cross Fund.

The money was allocated to the purchase of books and periodicals for camps and hospitals. I am sure, therefore, that it made possible a valuable extension of our Chapter's work for the service men and veterans.

Yours very truly,
Charles T. Harrison
Chairman

The contribution acknowledged above was made from profits from the sale of Freedom Speaks.

New Developments . . .

(Continued from page 1, col. 4)

knowledge of literature—including foreign literature—and to apply what ever is most relevant in his knowledge to the discussion of a particular literary problem; second, his ability to interpret and evaluate a given piece of writing, to recognize its qualities, to differentiate it from other writings, and to associate it with the work of particular authors or particular periods; third, his ability to write correctly and effectively. Accordingly, the first examination-period will be devoted to the discussion of one, or at most, two critical problems. The problems assigned will allow the student great freedom in choosing his illustrations, but will demand that he bring together elements of knowledge from diverse areas of literature. The second examination-period will be devoted to the criticism of particular passages of verse and prose. Thus the main achievement to be tested is the extent of the student's ability to engage in intelligent and searching critical discussion.

The elementary courses in English have been thoroughly revised in order to offer various courses suited to the needs of individual students. The Freshman entering Yale may be enrolled in any one of four English courses, according to his abilities and interests. Freshmen especially weak in composition and reading will take English 10, "Problems in Writing and Reading." The first term in this course is devoted to remedial composition, along with close study of English expository prose. Modern journalistic prose is avoided; the prose examined is taken predominately from such writers as Bacon, Milton, Swift, Johnson, and Arnold, along with a few later writers of established excellence. The second term of the course continues its emphasis on composition in connection with the reading of short poems, a novel, and two Shakespearean plays. Students of average ability in writing and reading are enrolled in English 15, "Literary Interpretation and Analysis." The first term of this course is spent in careful study of short poems, short stories, and a novel; the second term is given over entirely to the study of Shakespeare; five plays are studied in class, and three or four are assigned as outside reading. This course gives practice in writing through the composition of interpretative papers.

Freshmen of superior ability, in accordance with their interests, may take either of two courses offered at a higher level, and taken by most students in Sophomore year (or in Junior and Senior years, in some cases). One of these is English 24, "Reading in English Literature," a course devoted to study of various kinds of prose fiction, poetry, and drama by significant English writers: **Gulliver's Travels, Tom Jones,** and a novel of the nineteenth century; **Paradise Lost, Don Juan,** and selected recent poets; plays by Shakespeare and Shaw. This course is designed mainly for students not planning to major in literary subjects. The elementary course at the highest level is English 25, "Representative English Authors," designed mainly for students of strong literary ability and interest, and a prerequisite for the English Major; its materials are drawn from: the **Canterbury Tales,** the **Faerie Queene,** the King James Bible, **Paradise Lost, Gulliver's Travels,** the poetry of Pope, Wordworth's **Prelude,** and the poetry of T. S. Eliot. After English 10 or 15, students may enroll in either English 24 or 25, according to their abilities or interests. Either English 24 or 25 automatically admits a student to most upper-class courses in English. The department has thus attempted to offer integrated education in English for students of every kind.

A third innovation of some interest is the course in literature developed for the Program of Directed Studies, which is at present limited to forty students in each class. As this program is described at length in the report of the Yale College Course of Study Committee, copies of which are available on request, it needs only the briefest summary here. The program has two phases, one covering the work of the Freshman and Sophomore years and one the work thereafter. The purpose of the earlier phase is to supply a group of studies that shall be common to all who elect the program, studies unified among themselves, and central to the humane tradition. To effect community, the courses of this first phase are entirely prescribed: in the Freshman year, language (here the student makes his own selection), literature, mathematics, philosophy, and inorganic science (a course in principles, combining chemistry with physics); in the Sophomore year, history, language, studies in society (again a course in principles, combining sociology and economics), philosophy, and organic science (like the former course in science, but combining biology with botany and zoology). The two philosophy courses have been designed to effect the unity of these different disciplines, to study their relationships, their epistemological assumptions, and their ethical implications. The third objective, centrality, needs no special comment, but it is here that the course in literature has an especially important role.

At the close of eleven weeks it is too early to say whether this course is fulfilling its aims, but it is possible to state them. To those who designed the course it has long seemed that what the entering Freshman most needs as preparation for further humanistic studies is to meet with a larger number of massive literary structures than he has before encountered, to stock his mind with a wider knowledge than he has usually yet acquired of the fundamental allusions, symbols, concepts, and ideas that literature and educated discourse take for granted, and to acquire experience at first hand of at least some of the works that have helped to form his cultural tradition. With these aims in mind, the present course is built upon three of the formative elements in the cultural background of English-speaking peoples: the Old Testament; Greek and Shakespearean tragic drama; classical and modern epic literature. The Old Testament (in part), the **Agamemnon, Oedipus Tyrannus, Antigone,** and **Hippolytus, Othello, King Lear,** and **Antony and Cleopatra** occupy the first semester; the **Odyssey,** the **Aeneid,** and **Paradise Lost** furnish the epic patterns of the second, and the gradual mutations and adaptations of the "heroic" impulse are studied, later in the same semester, in the **Rape of the Lock, Tom Jones, Don Juan,** and the **Waste Land.** The combination of classical with English works has already proved its usefulness in requiring the student to take in the larger historical, imaginative, and ethical issues that come through ancient literature even when studied in translation, while at the same time he is also sharpening his perceptions by the close literary analysis that is possible with writings in his own language. The course is taught through an hour in lecture and two hours in discussion group each week; the lecture provides the historical and other background information necessary to the understanding of the assignments, so that the discussions can be devoted, as they should be, to interpretation.

Though it is important to repeat that it is too early to be sure of the success of the course, we should note the extraordinary interest so far aroused by the Old Testament and the Greek plays among a group of Freshmen representing a cross-section from top to bottom of the entering class, and the type of comment that several of them seem to be making about the course: "At last a chance to get my teeth in something big"; "Say, this Old Testament really makes you stop to think what you believe"; "This guy Sophocles hits me where I live." Such things suggest that the experiment has been worth while, and confirm the suspicion of the present writers that the way to get the best from students is to give it to them.

Maynard Mack
Louise Martz
Yale University

New Addresses Needed For the Following:

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Members are urged not to stifle their impulse to write to the editor.

Overheard on Campus

a student:

"The thing I've never learned in LIT
is how not to my infinitives split."

a professor:

"If I find additional footnotes
of no importance at all
to some inconsequential data
I'll rate a raise next fall."

Donald H. MacMahon
Georgia State College for Women